

Conserving our culture

The Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials (AICCM) held its annual conference in Launceston from 13 to 16 August 1990. In contrast to previous conferences which have tended to be technical and rather inward looking, this meeting, while not neglecting technical matters, attempted to address the broader issues of what roles conservators and the AICCM should play in the wider community.

In exploring this theme, the speakers, who represented a large number of different interest groups, gave their views on:

- how conservation issues could be brought to the attention of a wider group of people
- how conservators could improve their relationships with other professionals, such as curators, architects, librarians, archivists, publishers, scientists, paper manufacturers, and members of the general public, with whom they have regular contact.

The experiences of many environmentalists were drawn upon by Bob Brown, Independent Tasmanian MHA, and Phillip Toyne, Director of the Australian Conservation Foundation, to illustrate how issues can be brought to the attention of the public.

Of particular interest to readers of *inCite* were the first day's sessions which had the theme of Striving for a Longer Life for Paper and the Environment. Presentations covered a broad range of issues dealing with the production, permanence, use and availability of many

types of paper in Australia. The presentation by Dan Sprod, Blubber Head Press, highlighted the lack of knowledge in the publishing and printing industries of the problems created in libraries by the use of poor quality papers.

Government directives to institutions to 'go commercial' were covered on the second day during discussions which examined the issue of Private Conservation: Directions and Issues. The experiences of institutions which have been required to follow this path indicate that the marketing of conservation services is not an automatic revenue raising activity. Difficulties identified in the use of private conservators by institutions were related to the isolation of conservation from the preservation management of collections.

The third day was devoted to working group sessions. The Archival Paper Action Group had a very successful meeting in which the activities of the past year were reviewed and a plan of action was prepared for the coming year. One of the main tasks for the coming year is to establish contact with other professional organisations such as ALIA, ACLIS Preservation Committees, ASA, CSIRO, and the Records Management Association.

The last day's session, Conservation and the Wider Community, opened with a presentation by Andrew Reeves, Museum of Victoria, on the negotiations for the establishment of a Heritage Collections Council. He described the Heritage Collections Working Group which has been set up with a budget of \$300 000 over 3 years

to define the National Collection, to survey its condition, to assess its preservation needs, to recommend strategies for access and to promote its importance. The session went on to examine the relationships between conservators and other professionals working in collecting institutions.

The conference concluded with a panel session which debated how the conservation of cultural materials could be made of more significance to the general public and to the broad range of professionals employed in the 'cultural industries'. The general conclusion was that if conservators are to maintain a professional identity, while at the same time playing a more significant role in the collecting institutions and in the wider community, it is essential that they: increase their knowledge of factors affecting the significance of items; communicate more effectively with other professionals and with members of the public; establish strong professional links with related professional organisations; and encourage the teaching of conservation and preservation in a wide variety of professions.

The conference received very wide local media coverage and towards the end of the conference it was not uncommon to find taxi drivers and shop keepers who knew all about the brittle Book Problem in libraries! The proceedings of the conference are to be published at the end of September 1990.

Lynn Allen
National Library of Australia



Northcote Library on the National agenda

Northcote Library received a National Agenda for Women Grant in 1989 to run a successful series of courses designed to meet women's needs and broaden their horizons.

Starting with 'Search for Self' and 'Communication Skills' courses, the program then moved on to assertiveness training groups followed by 'Stress Management and Conflict Resolution' and 'Fulfilling Relationships'.

Aside from the immediate service provided by the classes, the grant had a 'seeding' effect, in that the library was able to demonstrate the community need for continuing education of this sort to other funding bodies.



Expo's for public library promotion

Victoria's fourth Public Library Expo will be opened on Tuesday, 16 October 1990, in the Bourke Street Mall during Australian Library Week. On Saturday,

20 October, there will be Expo's at the Chadstone Shopping Centre, Highpoint West Shopping Centre and Southland Shopping Centre. On Friday, 26 October, the final Expo for this year will be held at the Knox City Shopping Centre.

The Expo's will feature displays of library services as well as activities such as storytellers, puppet theatres and entertainers. They are being organised by the Victorian Public Library Expo Association (VPLEA), to promote the interest in and use of public libraries; to organise at least one public library expo per year; to cooperate with other organisations with similar aims, including the Library Promotion Committee of Victoria; and to raise funds for these aims.

Membership of the Association is open to all Victorian public libraries, professional and related organisations, and groups or individuals who support the Association's aims. The VPLEA enjoys the support of the library industry and many professional bodies. Fund-raising is from the general support of the library industry, as well as by direct sponsorship appeals to library related organisations.



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